

Opening Statement
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Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific
The "U.S.-India Global Partnership:" How Significant for American Interests?
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling the third in a series of hearings examining the U.S.-India relations and the proposed civil nuclear agreement between our two countries. We appreciate the testimony of our distinguished witnesses and look forward to the exchange of views to follow.

As we think about American interests in South Asia and related regions, the basic strategic intent of the Bush Administration is clear. The United States seeks to accelerate the development of a democratic partnership with India, maintain a stable and enduring relationship with a moderate Pakistan, and continue to nurture respectful and mutually beneficial relations with the other countries in the region. In my view, the Congress strongly supports these objectives.

While the broad outline of Administration objectives are unmistakable, the wisdom of Administration policy approaches at any given moment, such as those this Committee has been seized with for the past several months, will of necessity require nuanced judgments.

In this context, I am frankly disappointed the U.S. has not to date unequivocally endorsed Indian permanent membership in the UN Security Council. The fact that the issue has been deferred rather than rejected holds out more than a glimmer of hope, but it is intellectually and strategically bankrupt logic to do anything except unrelentingly advocate permanent Indian Security Council membership. Nevertheless, by any objective measure, US-India relations have never been on more solid footing.

For example, there is virtually no dissent in Washington from the precept that the U.S.-India relationship holds considerable promise, particularly in science and technology, as well as expanded trade and investment ties. On the other hand, policymakers in Washington would be wise to recognize India's distinct regional and global interests, its long tradition of an independent foreign policy, as well as certain domestic political constraints and perhaps temper expectations accordingly.

In any regard, whether in terms of the longevity of its civilization, its recent political history, its vigorous multi-ethnic democracy and its rising profile on the world stage, America can only tip its hat to an ancient civilization that has become such a fast modernizing society. Recent controversies should not obscure the fact that America is embracing India in ways that were scarcely conceivable just a few years ago, and there is every reason to be confident that ours will be a stable and productive relationship for many years to come.
